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## Research Report

COMBAT SUPPORT DOCTRINE: WHERE

WE'VE BEEN, WHERE WE ARE AND

WHERE WE SHOULD BE GOING

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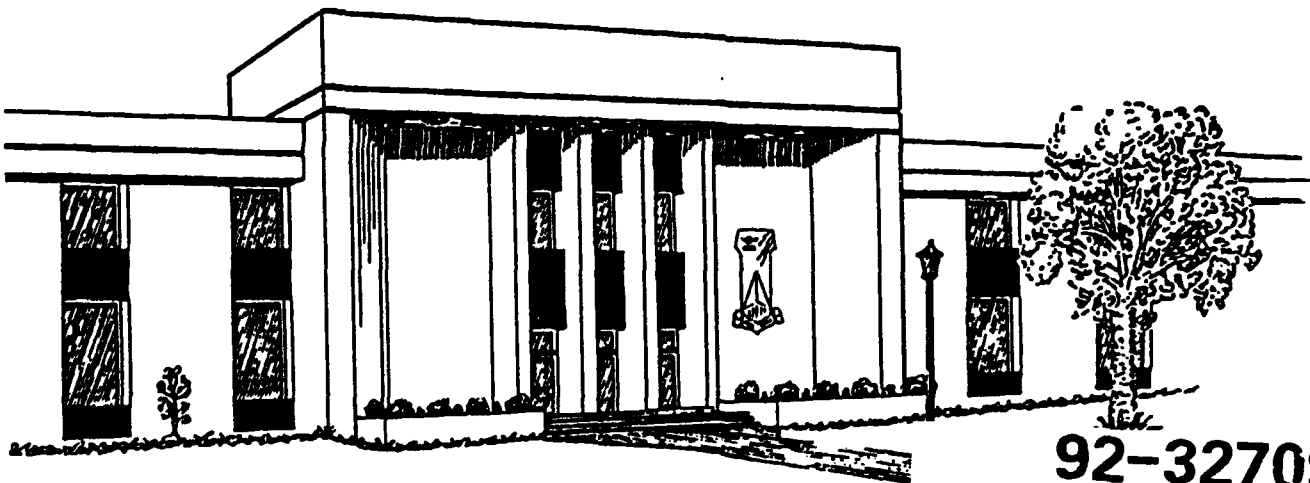
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AIR WAR COLLEGE

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COMBAT SUPPORT DOCTRINE: WHERE WE'VE BEEN, WHERE WE ARE  
AND WHERE WE SHOULD BE GOING.

by

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A RESEARCH REPORT SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY

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## ABSTRACT

TITLE: Combat Support Doctrine: Where We've Been, Where We  
Are and Where We Should Be Going.

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This article is about U.S Air Force combat support, or logistics, doctrine, where it is today, and where it should be headed in the immediate future. The basic premise is that the post Desert Storm environment, combined with the recent significant changes in U.S. military strategy and the U.S. Air Force organizational environment, make the present an opportune time to review and update combat support doctrine. A brief history of the development of combat support doctrine is presented, followed by a review of some doctrinal lessons from military history that may be applicable to the current situation concerning combat support doctrine. Finally, the article provides some suggestions for how the USAF should proceed with reviewing and updating its combat support doctrine.

## Introduction

Doctrine is an essential asset for the military profession. Emphasizing its significance, General Curtis E. LeMay described doctrine in the following way:

At the very heart of warfare lies doctrine. It represents the central beliefs for waging war in order to achieve victory. Doctrine is of the mind, a network of faith and knowledge reinforced by experience which lays the pattern for utilization of men, equipment, and tactics. It is the building material for strategy. It is fundamental to sound judgement. (1)

Since the early years of our service Air Force logisticians have struggled with developing logistics doctrine. Their diligent efforts have resulted in the creation of a logistics doctrine which is currently the subject of AFM 1-10. AFM 1-10, however, is called Combat Support Doctrine instead of Logistics Doctrine. And why it is called Combat Support Doctrine is a whole story in and of itself. In this article the terms "logistics" and "combat support" mean basically the same thing. This assumption should not be too hard to accept, since in AFM 1-10 combat support is defined as ". . . the art and science of creating and sustaining combat capability . . . .", which is how Admiral Eccles, the first well known U.S. logistics theorist, defined the objective of a logistics effort in his classic 1959 text, Logistics in the National Defense. But the logistics versus combat support issue is another argument and it's not what this article is about. (2:1-1; 3:42)

This article is about combat support doctrine, where it is today, and where it should be headed in the immediate future. The basic premise is that the post Desert Storm environment, combined with the recent significant changes in U.S. military strategy and the U.S. Air Force organizational environment, make the present an opportune time to review and update Air Force combat support doctrine. Before explaining why this premise is true, a brief history of the development of combat support doctrine is presented, followed by a review of some doctrinal lessons from military history that may be applicable to the current situation concerning combat support doctrine. Before concluding, I will suggest some directions for how the USAF should proceed with reviewing and updating its combat support doctrine.

### History of Combat Support Doctrine

The Army Air Corps made an initial attempt at air force logistics doctrine in 1943 with the development of the Army Air Corps "Logistical Manual". This manual, which was primarily a logistics planning document containing general logistics data and planning tables, actually contained few doctrinal statements. It evolved into AFM 400-5 which was discontinued in 1960 because of problems in maintaining its currency. It was followed by a similar attempt in 1957,

which involved the publication of a study entitled "The Development of Air Logistic Doctrine 1948-1956", by Robert A. Smith, III. (4:3)

In 1955, the Advanced Logistics Course was developed at the Air Force institute of Technology (AFIT) for the main purposes of training logisticians and developing logistics doctrine and philosophy. This course evolved into the AFIT School of Systems and Logistics. (4:4) In 1967 a thesis by a team of AFIT students identified a need for an Air Force logistics doctrine. The thesis team took on the task of ascertaining and codifying ". . . basic truths, principles or precepts relevant to formulation of an Air Force basic logistic doctrine." (5:9) This AFIT thesis eventually led to the development and publication, in 1968, of AFM 400-2, Air Force Logistics Doctrine. (4:4)

The purpose of AFM 400-2 was to define basic principles and concepts for the support of aerospace forces. (6:32) Beginning in 1980, there were several proposals to revise the 1968 document and several failed attempts to publish a new doctrine. (4:4;6:32-35;7:10) A further attempt was initiated at a 1984 CROSSTALK Conference. This attempt eventually led to the publication of AFM 1-10. Apparently, the manual was entitled Combat Support Doctrine for the benefit of Air Force civil engineers and others who do not consider themselves logisticians, and also because the term "combat support " was not defined in JCS Pub 1 and was, therefore, available for use. (7:12) In summary, AFM

1-10 includes a definition and general description of combat support, a description of the generic combat support structure and the combat support process, and an explanation of eight basic combat support principles--objective, leadership, effectiveness, trauma/friction, balance, control, flexibility, and synchronization. (2:1-1-3-6)

Since AFM 1-10 was published on 1 April 1987, various critiques have either challenged it, praised it, or recommended changes. (8;9;10) However, no changes have been made since the original publication, although the Civil Engineering community published a follow-on doctrinal manual--AFM 3-2, Civil Engineering Combat Support Doctrine. The civil engineering doctrinal manual was developed in 1991 to explain the relationship of the air base and the engineer to aerospace power and provide guiding precepts for Air Force leaders and engineers. (11:1)

In recent years, progress has been made in the development and assessment of doctrine for the logistics support of joint operations. In line with the recent increase in the importance of jointness, joint logistics doctrine has been developed and published by the Joint Staff in Joint Test Pub 4-0, Doctrine for Logistic Support of Joint Operations. This new joint logistics doctrine identifies the basic logistic principles as: responsiveness, simplicity, flexibility, economy, attainability, sustainability, and survivability; which are somewhat different from the combat support principles in AFM 1-10. (12;13)



## Lessons From the History of Operational Doctrine

According to the lead paragraph of AFM 1-10, doctrine ". . . offers guidance to be used by Air Force leaders to: (1) learn from the past, (2) act in the present and influence the future." (2:iii) If it does nothing else, this point begs a question about whether or not lessons of the past might help as we try to determine where we should be headed with combat support doctrine. The problem here is that Air Force combat support doctrine has a relatively short history. But the history of the operational art of war as it relates to doctrine is not short and it may provide some applicable lessons. Upon review of this history, one particular thought becomes quite clear. That is that there are doctrinal lessons that show up when one reviews the histories of particular wars; however, for a variety of reasons, military leaders have frequently failed to properly learn those lessons, and to revise faulty doctrine where necessary. In some cases these failures have lead to rather significant disasters in later conflicts.

For example, one of the important doctrinal lessons that should have been learned from the American Civil War was that, given the improvements that had been made in firepower, frontal assaults by infantry against fixed fortifications were likely to result in disastrous losses. (14:419) Before the end of the Nineteenth Century a very similar lesson showed up again in the Anglo-Boer War in South

Africa. (15:516) In spite of these lessons, and the fact that there had been even more significant technological improvements in firepower, armies (most notably the French) still entered World War I with doctrines relying on frontal infantry assaults. And of course, the horrifying results on the French frontier in 1914 are still well etched in the memories of military historians. (15:520-526)

Another more recent example of a failure to pay attention to doctrinal lessons of warfare has to do with the ever controversial subject of command and control of airpower. A lesson of World War II, particularly the war in North Africa, was that to be most effective ". . . airpower must be centrally controlled and employed by an air commander." (16:A-2-A-3) Problems with the command and control of U.S. airpower during the Vietnam War, however, indicate a definite failure to carry this lesson forward to that particular conflict. Especially during the Rolling Thunder Campaigns, the absence of a single air commander led to chaos and less than effective results. (17:128)

It would not take a great deal more research to come up with similar historical examples, but the point should be clear. Following a war, doctrine must be reviewed to determine how it might be revised to accommodate the lessons of the conflict, and this review/revision must be carried through to ensure the appropriate doctrinal changes are fully documented and implemented.

An Opportune Time to Review and Possibly Revise Combat  
Support Doctrine

So what does all of this have to do with combat support doctrine and the present situation? A 1989 Air War College study of combat support doctrine pointed out that, "For a doctrine to be viable it must be tested . . . .", and that at that particular time Air Force combat support doctrine had not been tested. (18:32) That is obviously no longer the case. We should be able to view Operation Desert Shield/Storm as an excellent test of the existing combat support doctrine. After all, this operation was one of the largest and most complicated logistical undertakings the U.S. Air Force has experienced since becoming a separate service. This fact alone should make it clear that the lessons learned from Operation Desert Shield/Storm provide a unique opportunity to assess combat support doctrine and revise the doctrine if necessary. In fact, assessing the doctrine based on the wartime lessons is necessary to ensure that related mistakes from the history of operational doctrine can be avoided. The Desert Shield/Storm logistics lessons are currently being pieced together under the lead of an Air Force Logistics Management Center (AFLMC) project. (19:1-2) Whatever else is done with the results of these important efforts, if we are serious about having a viable combat support doctrine, we must ensure the results form the basis of a review/revision of AFM 1-10.

In addition to the results of Operation Desert Shield/Storm, other factors make the present an opportune time to review and revise combat support doctrine. One is the fact that U.S. military strategy is experiencing a monumental change. Primarily due to the collapse of the Soviet Union, U.S. military strategy has evolved from a strategy based on containment to one based on power projection, with an emphasis on potential regional contingencies. (20:29;21) A rather well accepted concept, that has been proven in the past, is that strategy and logistics are intimately related. This is one of the most significant concepts that Eccles developed in Logistics in the National Defense. He provides several examples in his book that illustrate the importance of this relationship. (3:30-41) Given this intimate logistics-strategy relationship, and the significant and on-going changes in U.S. Military strategy, it should clearly follow that our basic logistics concepts may also be due for changes. These strategy changes, combined with the drawdown in the size of our military forces, have already had major impacts on Air Force logistics in the form of organizational changes that significantly affect logistics and combat support. (22:2-11)

If we accept the fact that AFM 1-10 is an important document that should provide the basis for how we support Air Force systems, then the urgent need for a review and revision of the manual should be evident. In fact, this is a must if logistics is to stay abreast of strategy.

Furthermore, this should be accomplished before the strategy and operationally related changes progress too far. The process that calls for completing a strategy or an operational plan and then turning it over to logisticians to work out the support details has been tried before, to the consternation of the affected logisticians. History has taught us this is not the best way to operate or to plan. Logistics planning and preparations must be conducted concurrently with strategy development and operational planning. (12:II-1) Alluding to this necessity, Eccles wrote ". . . once a commander thinks of the strategic, logistical, and tactical elements as individual or isolated matters he has lost his perspective." (3:20-21)

Another factor calling for a review and revision of Air Force combat support doctrine is the recent progress in the development of joint logistics doctrine. Joint logistics doctrine had not been developed when AFM 1-10 was published. Now that it exists there should be an effort to ensure more congruence between the two doctrines. After all, ultimately Air Force combat support doctrine is about the logistics support of the aerospace component of joint forces assigned to unified and specified commands. Furthermore, we are seeing an increase in the involvement of the joint community in logistics functions that were the sole responsibility of the Services in the past. The involvement of the Joint Requirements Oversight Council (JROC) in the acquisition of weapon systems is just one

example. All of this points to a need to try to bring the two doctrines closer together. A review of the basic principles of both doctrines indicates there is work to be done to ensure more agreement between the two.

#### Where do We Go from Here?

The first step required to form the basis of a thorough review and revision of Air Force combat support doctrine has already been initiated--the development of logistics lessons learned from Operation Desert Shield/Storm. As already explained in this article, this project is being conducted under the auspices of the Air Force Logistics Management Center. (19:1) Once the identification of these lessons learned is complete, a working group should be formed to determine how Air Force combat support doctrine should be changed based on the lessons. Experiences from the group formed in 1985 to develop the initial combat support doctrine should provide some useful background for organizing and conducting the working group. (7) The group should represent an organizational cross-section of the Air Force and include representation of organizations that had significant involvement in the logistics support of Operation Desert Shield/Storm.

In addition to revising combat support doctrine based on lessons from Operation Desert Shield/Storm, the working

group should also focus on updating the doctrine so it is in concert with the new national military strategy. More-so than at any other time in the past, the new national military strategy, based primarily on rapid deployment and power projection, is going to demand that both our weapon systems and the logistics systems required to support them are highly mobile. The likelihood that fewer defense dollars will be available for building a significantly larger strategic lift capability makes this point even more critical. As the working group reviews and revises the doctrine, this concept of a more mobile force with a more mobile logistics structure should be viewed as one of the most important and basic foundations of our future logistics systems.

Furthermore, our combat support doctrine should give serious consideration to concepts that can help reduce wartime lift requirements such as host nation support and prepositioning. Evidence indicates that host nation support was extremely beneficial during the Gulf War and will most likely be important in future conflicts. Prepositioning was also important to Gulf War logistics successes. However, since the potential location of our next military engagement is now less predictable than in the past, prepositioning is likely to be a more complicated proposition. More afloat prepositioning may be a possible answer. (23:7-8)

The group should also devote some attention to a new concept called "reconstitution", which is now a part of our

national military strategy. Reconstitution refers to the rebuilding of military forces that would have to take place after the drawdown in response to a strategic warning of a significant increase in the threat. Logistics and combat support would be key factors in such a build-up. (21:25) Addressing the significance of reconstitution with respect to logistics in the U.S. Army, General Carl Vuono wrote, "Logisticians must be particularly cognizant of reconstitution, not only from a force structure standpoint but also with a clear recognition of the supplies, equipment, and services that mobilization demands." (20:29) Reconstitution is likely to be just as important to logistics or combat support in the Air Force.

In addition, as the working group carries out this project they should consider the recently developed joint logistics doctrine and focus on developing a Service combat support doctrine that is consistent with the new joint doctrine. To help in this effort, representatives from the Joint Staff who have responsibilities for joint logistics doctrine should participate in the working group.

As the review and revision of Air Force combat support doctrine proceeds, some caution will be necessary in a few areas. First of all, there is likely to be a tendency to view the results of Gulf War logistics efforts in a purely positive light. Admiral Harry D. Train II somewhat sarcastically wrote about a particular phenomenon we should remain conscious of, ". . . the normal baggage of American



human nature that prefers being ruined by praise to being saved by criticism." (23:50) The logistics accomplishments during the war have already received high praise and rightfully so because the logistics support of Operation Desert Shield/Storm truly was a massive undertaking. Logistics has been identified as ". . . the essential element in projecting military power into the area of operations." (20:28) While our logisticians are extremely deserving of the high praise and can be proud of their efforts, they should be cautious of the tendency to get so carried away with the positive aspects that they overlook the mistakes that were made, or the potentially avoidable problems that occurred. This general tendency could very well be one of the main reasons why the history of warfare shows that learning and applying the doctrinal lessons of wars is not always that easy. Should learning and applying doctrinal lessons relating to combat support be any easier? Let's hope so.

Caution should also be exercised with regard to how the logistics lessons learned are organized and analyzed. While something certainly may be gained from organizing the lessons into functional logistics or combat support areas, such as maintenance, transportation, supply, contracting, etc., the significant lessons should also be viewed from the aspect of the total logistics or combat support system. This is especially true if we hope to be able to apply the lessons learned to Air Force combat support doctrine which

rightfully describes our entire combat support system from a broad, systemic perspective.

### Conclusion

Whether it be doctrine for operations, combat support, or some other branch or function of the military, doctrine is absolutely necessary to provide the general direction and guidelines for how we operate or provide support to combat forces. However, doctrine cannot remain useful if it is not revised based on lessons learned, and to keep pace with the times.

When Air Force Combat Support Doctrine was developed and published in AFM 1-10, it was a major accomplishment for Air Force logisticians. While there may be many differences of opinion about exactly what the doctrine should include, it clearly provides a comprehensive foundation for educating and training Air Force logisticians and for organizing, equipping, and sustaining aerospace forces for war. (2:iii) We owe it to those who developed this doctrine, and especially to the future Air Force logistics community, to continue to build on this foundation.

In his foreword to Civil Engineering Combat Support Doctrine, Major General Joseph A. Ahearn wrote,

Doctrine is not static. It must be periodically reviewed and updated to keep it relevant in light of changing threats, technologies, operational strategies, and Air Force Doctrine. To support the dynamic nature

of doctrine, personnel should recommend changes when factors make doctrinal precepts obsolete. (11)

The logistics lessons learned from the recent Gulf War experience, combined with the significant changes taking place in today's military, create an environment that demands a thorough review and revision of AFM 1-10. Because logistics is such a critical factor in modern warfare, whether or not we satisfy this demand today could have a great deal to do with the results of future conflicts that may involve U.S. aerospace forces.

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